

ABSTRACT

5 A novel advanced set top terminal having electronic mail capable of digital decompression, menu generation, interactivity, and other advanced functional capabilities for use in a television program delivery system (200) is described. The invention relates to methods and apparatus for upgrading existing set top terminals (220) to provide electronic mail capability and advanced functional capabilities. The invention is particularly useful in television program delivery systems (200) providing (i) menu driven program selection through the addition of an upgrade module (300) or menu generation card and (ii) advanced functional capabilities using a set of hardware upgrades (e.g., 130) and/or an expansion card. Specifically, the invention is an upgradeable system that supports electronic mail through the use of internal software, hardware upgrades, an upgrade module and/or expansion cards.

10 The upgraded hardware generally includes a microprocessor, various input/output ports (e.g., 308), processing circuitry (e.g., 108) and memory (e.g., 116). The invention results in an upgraded set top terminal having electronic mail that supports: menu generation; interactive services; message services; and on-line databases, among other features and capabilities.